

NIGHT LINE

Who are they, those midnight callers,
who start with "Uhhh -- Heil Hitler!"?
Where are the rooms they sit in
behind anonymous outlets for their dreams of
genocide? It could be any lit window
I am driving by, static to their voices. Even
the family next door may never know it's
them. A broken vocal cord has just strangled
a bearded weirdo. A shrilling female brogue
wipes out a million niggers 'n kikes for God 'n
Country. A slurring tongue quotes from the Bible
to pronounce, "I'm armed & ready for 'em." For whom?
He doesn't say, but one imagines. These present here
are on the air, are in the air, using the air to rail
against pollution of the air, abortion, Cuba, faggots,
Whitey, Black Apes, The Pill, control of guns, them pigs.
Lawn-order is the pass word. A girlish hit & run talker
shrieks obscenities, then, convulsed with laughter, pulls
the curtain of the dial tone.

This afternoon, they sold you gas & cigarettes
and you forever pass them in the A&P
with pushcarts full of cornflakes, toilet tissue, beer,
Tide, pet food, True Confessions.

There'll be another call, our number is. The lines
are open, ladies & gents, but first we must realize,
You can take Salem out of the country BUT
You can't take the country out of Salem. Thank you
for waiting.

EVERY DROP OF MYRRH HAS ITS CUP OF NECTAR
or
EVERY VICE HAS ITS VERSA

If every silverlining has its cloud
every thorn also has its rose.
What would a lie detector be without lies
what a versa without its vice?

If every ointment has its fly
every hair also has its soup.
How could wars be kept alive without soldiers dying
what would firemen do without arson?

If every Christ has his cross
every hemlock also has its Socrates.
What would a rainbow be without rain
what a sugarcoating without its pill?

If every TV show has its commercial
every calorie also has its milkshake.
What would taxes do without the poor
where would inmates be without jails?

In short: if one hand washes the other
the other also washes the one.
What would become of confessors without sins
what of divorces without marriage?

(What, for that matter, of rejection slips
without poems??)

-- Felix Pollak

Madison, Wisconsin

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